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ABSTRACT

This brief report cites the grade of "improving" given to the American educational system on the last of the six National Education Goals proposed by the President and the Governors in 1990. The sixth goal states that "By the Year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning." The report then discusses this goal in relation to students with disabilities, outlining the extent of drug use and other high risk behaviors among students with disabilities, the frequency of these students' involvement in disciplinary problems, methods of monitoring the quality of the learning environment for students with disabilities, and information that is still needed. (JDD)

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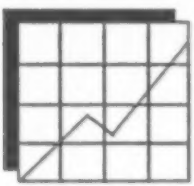
Promoting Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools

National Education Goal 6 and Students with Disabilities



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BRIEF REPORT
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National Center on Educational Outcomes

The College of Education
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

June, 1992

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National Education Goal 6

"By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning."

Objectives:

- Every school will implement a firm and fair policy on use, possession, and distribution of drugs and alcohol.
- Parents, businesses, and community organizations will work together to ensure that schools are a safe haven for all children.
- Every school district will develop a comprehensive K-12 drug and alcohol prevention education porgram. Drug anc alcohol curriculum should be taught as an integral part of health education. In addition, community-based teams should be organized to provide students and teachers with needed support.

From: The National Education Goals Report 1991: Building a Nation of Learners (Executive Summary). Washington, DC: National Education Goals Panel

Our nation has been given a grade of **IMPROVING** on the sixth of the six national education goals proposed by the President and the governors in 1990. But, the Goals Panel also notes that there is still much to be done. It stresses that our nation has little hope of reaching Goals 1-5 if it does not achieve Goal 6.

In reporting on what we now know about progress on Goal 6, the Goals Panel cites current levels of drug use, student victimization, and teacher safety. The Panel also presents information on student misbehavior, including skipping classes and tardiness, as evidence of non-"disciplined" schools. No information is presented that specifically addresses students with disabilities.

No attempt is made to differentiate the nature of the school environment for different subgroups of students, except for the information on **student victimization**, which shows that Black

students are more likely than Whites or Hispanics to be victims of violent acts at school involving weapons. Student victimization (including abuse, theft, and isolation) is an area of concern for students with disabilities, yet no data are available for these students.

The purpose of this Brief Report is to highlight what we know about students with disabilities in relation to Goal 6 of the six national education goals:

- ✓ How much do students with disabilities use **drugs** or engage in other behaviors of risk to their health and well being?
- ✓ How often are students with disabilities involved in **disciplinary problems**?
- ✓ How are we **monitoring** the quality of the learning environment for students with disabilities?
- ✓ What do we still **need to know**?

USE OF DRUGS AND OTHER HIGH RISK BEHAVIORS

We do not have information on the current drug use of students with disabilities. However, we do know that students with disabilities are more likely than other students to live in situations that have been identified as associated with greater risk for poverty, drug use, or other conditions that threaten their health and well being (Children's Defense Fund, 1991; National Commission on Children, 1991).

From the National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students (see Marder & Cox, 1991) we know that:

- ✓ 35% of secondary-age youth with disabilities live in a home where the household income is under $12,000, compared to 18% of youth in the general population

- ✓ 24% of secondary-age youth with disabilities are receiving food stamps, compared to 13% of youth in the general population

- ✓ 37% of secondary-age youth with disabilities are from single parent households, compared to 25% of youth in the general population

- ✓ 41% of secondary-age youth with disabilities live in a home where the household head has less than a high school education, compared to 22% of youth in the general population

DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS

Students who elect to skip school and engage in behaviors that result in suspensions from school represent significant disciplinary problems for schools. These problems are related to absenteeism. We have information on the absenteeism of students with disabilities from the National Longitudinal Transition Study (see Wagner, 1991):

- ✓ 32% of students with emotional disabilities have missed more than 20 days of school during the school year, compared to 17% of students in the general population

We also have information from this study on more severe behavior problems, as are reflected in arrest rates (see Newman, 1991):

- ✓ 9% of in-school youth with disabilities have been arrested, compared to 6% of in-school youth in the general population

In combination, absenteeism and disciplinary problems (implied by suspensions, expulsions, and arrests) create very negative outcomes for students with disabilities:

- ✓ 54% of students with disabilities who have poor attendance, disciplinary problems, and poor grades are likely to be retained in grade, compared to 17% of other students with disabilities

MONITORING SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

We do not currently have a good system for monitoring the freedom from drugs, school safety, and disciplinary characteristics of schools for students with disabilities. National data collection systems that gather information on some of these either exclude youth with disabilities from their efforts or do not identify youth with disabilities in a way that allows for separate reporting on them. Data bases that could provide useful information on alcohol and drug use, sexual knowledge and behavior, and other relevant topics include:

- ✓ National Adolescent Student Health Survey (NASHS)
- ✓ National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS)
- ✓ National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)
- ✓ Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

New data bases may need to be explored for additional information related to school safety. Possibilities include

- ✓ Surveys of weapon availability and use by school-age youngsters
- ✓ Insurance records of vandalism to school property

Since most students with disabilities attend the same schools as their peers without disabilities, it is reasonable to assume that the general school characteristics are the same. According to the Goals Panel, this includes:

- ✓ High schools in which about one-third of the teachers feel that they have little or no disciplinary control over students in their classrooms
- ✓ Public schools in which nearly 20% of the teachers report being verbally abused by students during a one-month time period
- ✓ Schools in which 42% of 12th graders report having had property stolen at school
- ✓ Schools in which 30% of 12th graders report that alcohol and marijuana are easy to obtain in school

WHAT WE STILL NEED TO KNOW

Students with disabilities are particularly at risk when it comes to considering discipline, safety, and drug use. Thus, it is important that we know about these factors specifically as they relate to these students. We must collect information on:

- ✓ Current drug use
- ✓ Availability of drugs
- ✓ Abuse toward students with disabilities
- ✓ Student abuse toward teachers
- ✓ Incidence of behaviors requiring disciplinary actions

We must look seriously at current data collection programs to obtain information on these and other topics related to how well we are providing safe, disciplined, and drug-free school environments for our youth with disabilities.

Information Sources

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The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) was established in October, 1990 to work with state departments of education, national policy-making groups, and others to facilitate and enrich the development and use of indicators of educational outcomes for students with disabilities. The Center represents a collaborative effort of the University of Minnesota, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, and St. Cloud State University. The Center is supported through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (H159C00004). Opinions or points of view do not necessarily represent those of the U.S. Department of Education or Offices within it.

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